

WINDOW THE

TYRELL JOHNSON: A Young Man On A Serious Mission

Tyrell Johnson has never met a challenge he couldn't conquer.

In fact, his "can-do" attitude is nothing short of legendary on the MSB campus, where, he refused to give up (through multiple tests) until he had passed the four Maryland High School Assessments required for graduation.

So with a high school diploma now in hand and more than a few essential skills under his belt, Tyrell is looking forward to college in the fall, where he plans to earn a certificate in website programming. Until then, he's hard at work checking out apartments, finding a part-time job and keeping in shape with regular laps at the pool.

As Tyrell will be the first to tell you, he comes by his single-minded determination honestly, having been raised by a devoted mother, who has never been one to back down when it comes to helping her son succeed.

"Tyrell seemed just fine for the first year, talking at seven months and walking a few months later. Then at 15 months, I noticed that something was not right with his vision. When his pediatrician brushed me off, I took him to my own eye doctor, who saw exactly what I was talking about. He referred me to a specialist and I just kept moving from there," says Cecelia Hill.

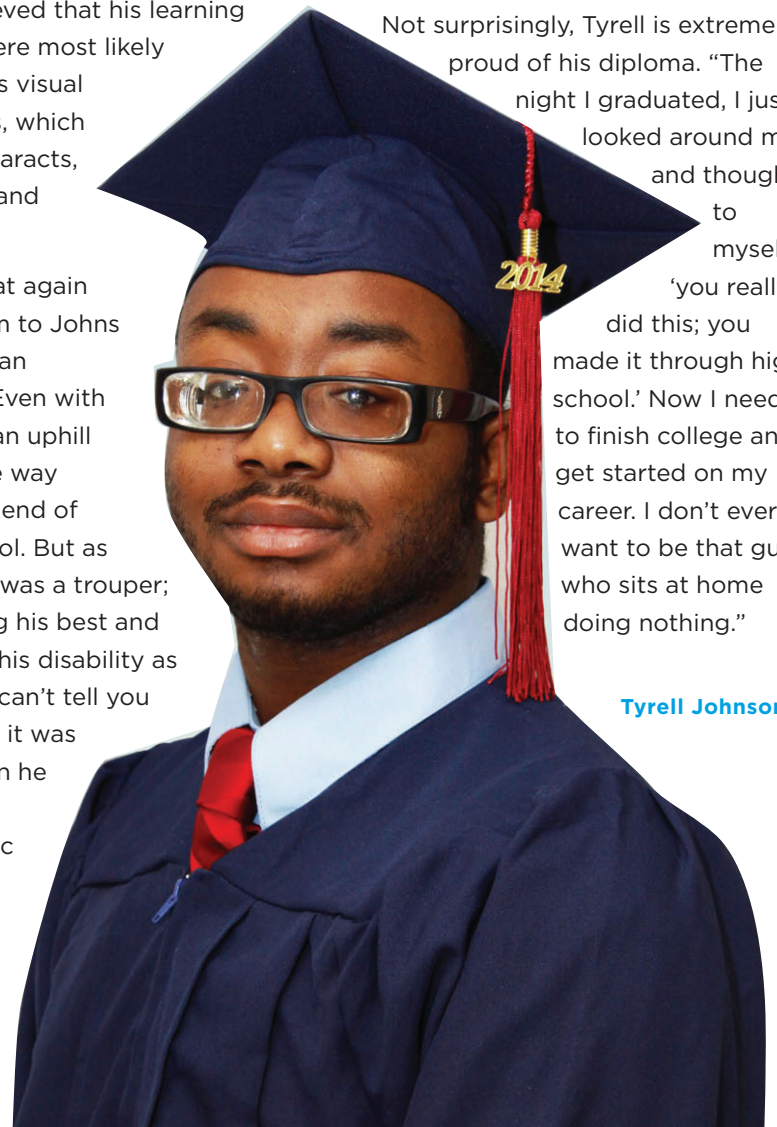
As it turned out, Tyrell had Stickler Syndrome, a genetic condition that comes with a host of visual, audiological and orthopedic challenges. And while he started kindergarten on a positive foot at his local elementary school, the tide quickly turned in second grade when he began having a hard time keeping up with his schoolwork. Given what she knew about her son's intelligence, Cecelia believed that his learning problems were most likely related to his visual impairments, which included cataracts, strabismus, and glaucoma.

"I went to bat again and took him to Johns Hopkins for an evaluation. Even with that, it was an uphill battle all the way through the end of middle school. But as usual, Tyrell was a trouper; always doing his best and never using his disability as an excuse. I can't tell you what a relief it was though when he made it into the academic high school program at MSB, where God blessed

us both." The school's specialists worked with them to come up with an effective educational plan (which included classes at nearby Parkville High School), along with just the right support services. According to Tyrell, "My job was to get it done, whatever it took, and they were there for me all the way." So much so, in fact, that he and his mother will always think of their MSB team as "family."

Not surprisingly, Tyrell is extremely proud of his diploma. "The night I graduated, I just looked around me and thought to myself 'you really did this; you made it through high school.' Now I need to finish college and get started on my career. I don't ever want to be that guy who sits at home doing nothing."

Tyrell Johnson



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

At The Maryland School for the Blind, graduation is a time for families to celebrate. Like Tyrell Johnson and his mother, our students and their parents often come to think of the staff here at MSB as extended family members, given the caring guidance and unconditional support they provide over what is often many years. On June 2, fourteen students graduated at this year's commencement celebration. As we see each year at this special time, there were many tears of happiness as the graduates were cheered for their success.

It was also a time for us to take stock of the tremendous progress MSB has made, thanks to individuals like you. With your generous support, soon we will be cutting the ribbon on a state-of-the-art complex for students with multiple disabilities. We are also grateful that soon we will break ground on facilities for our students who are blind and have autism. In fact, while working hard to complete the current project, one of the construction workers unearthed a long-lost MSB class ring, which has now been ceremoniously reunited with its rightful owner more than three decades after he graduated!

Please allow me to express my heartfelt congratulations to the Class of 2014. I feel sure that each and every one of these fine young men and women will leave their mark on the world, just as they have left it on us here at the school.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Bina, Ed.D.
President



Tyrell and his mom, Cecelia, celebrate with Dr. Bina on Graduation day.

MSB ALUMNI PRESIDENT

SPOTLIGHT ON GLENN DICHIERA



Every Monday morning, dozens of yellow school buses bring students back to the MSB campus after a weekend at home, from across the state. But when Glenn Dichiera went to school here in the 1950s, the

bus was a Greyhound; the ride took six hours each way from Cumberland, Maryland; and the transportation schedule was far from weekly.

"After losing my eyesight at four, my parents wanted me to have the best education possible, which meant sending me many miles away to MSB. From the age of five, I boarded that bus all alone, four times a year, with instructions to have my house mother send my real mother a postcard when I got to Baltimore, because we didn't have a phone."

Glenn recalls being sad on those trips; at least up until the sixth grade when he began to dread leaving his friends, not to mention his sports activities, behind. "Our athletic teams were so competitive that one year, after the wrestling squad tied the top state team, the other schools in our league quickly cancelled their matches with us. I guess they didn't want to go down to a team of blind kids."

Although the campus environment was very different back then, before computers and technology, Glenn was well prepared for college and the career world when he graduated from MSB.

In fact, he not only earned two degrees, he spent 35 successful years as a vocational counselor for visually impaired adults. He and his longtime wife and MSB sweetheart, Joan, have a beautiful family. They are both active members of the MSB Alumni Association, with Glenn serving as the current President and Joan as Secretary. Glenn has been the president of the alumni association for 50 of its 76 years of existence.

His advice for this year's graduating class?

"Make the most of the experience you have had and hold on to the friendships you have made at this wonderful school. They are both priceless."



David Boone and Samantha Merryman shine at the prom.



Zachary Santos sets sail on the Baltimore Spirit.



Class V.P. Dimitri Mitropoulos is crowned Prom King.

14 YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WHO WILL CHANGE THE WORLD

Every year for the past 161 years, MSB families, friends, and staff gather on campus to celebrate yet another remarkable graduating class and its equally remarkable achievements. And this year was no exception.

After a whirlwind week of senior activities, which included a spectacular Hollywood themed prom night, the Class of 2014 stood proudly to receive their hard-earned diplomas, certificates, and awards. MSB President Dr. Michael Bina gave a heartwarming tribute, followed by

Senior Class President David Boone, who extolled the virtues of an MSB education and how the staff assisted him. Keynote speaker, Kevin O'Connor, former president of the National Association for Parents with Children Who Have Visual Impairments (NAPVI) truly captured the spirit of the evening when he exclaimed "these 14 people will change the world."

Two students who are well on their way to fulfilling that promise were also given special awards for their outstanding academic accomplish-

ments at MSB. David Boone received the B. Franklin Newcomer Award, which acknowledges demonstrated leadership and citizenship, in both school and dorm life. His fellow class member, Kuassi Kouhiko, a native of the Republic of Cote D'Ivoire, Abidjan-Plateau, took home the Alumni Award, for powering through tremendous obstacles, including a significant language barrier, which he overcame by learning English.

Congratulations Class of 2014!

The senior class and staff take a field trip to the Baltimore Harbor.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT



4th Annual "Swirl for a Girl" Gala most successful to date

On April 26, the Knefely Gymnasium at MSB was transformed into a midsummer night's dream as The Carman Lay Foundation held the 4th annual "Swirl for a Girl" Gala. The fundraising event, which benefits the students of MSB, was presented by Lewis Contractors and WBAL TV-11 and was hosted by sportscaster Keith Mills. Guests danced the night away to the music of the Sound Storm Band, enjoyed fabulous food and drinks and bid on an array of silent auction items including adventure packages, exotic trips, art work, jewelry and dining experiences.

The Carman Lay Foundation was founded by Tricia and Gary Lay to honor the memory of their daughter, Carman, who was a student at MSB, until her untimely death at the age of eight. The mission of the foundation is to provide funds to help the students of MSB reach beyond limits, acquire new skills, achieve what is possible and what sometimes seems impossible, and have experiences and relationships that make their lives more enriched and joyful.

"Swirl for a Girl" was created to not only be a fundraiser, but a celebration of Carman's spirit and her legacy of exceeding expectations. This year's event certainly exceeded expectations by raising \$62,970.

SAVE THE DATE

The Carman Lay Foundation will hold their next fundraiser, a **Bull & Oyster Roast**, on **October 4, 2014** on the MSB campus. For more information visit www.thecarmanlayfoundation.org

Camp Abilities Maryland to be held at MSB

MSB will play host to Camp Abilities Maryland, a developmental sports and recreation camp for children and youth ages 9-17 with visual impairments, from August 4-7. Camp Abilities has served students from Maryland, DC and Virginia for the past five years and is the only overnight sports camp in the state for blind or visually impaired students. The purpose of the program, which is managed by Camp Abilities Maryland, Inc., a non-profit organization, is to empower campers with visual impairments to be physically active, improve their health and well-being and to gain confidence. The camp teaches students what they CAN do in the area of sports, recreation and physical activity.

Camp Abilities helps students to develop not only physical fitness skills but also social skills by offering a traditional summer camp experience while providing instructional development in the areas of adapted sports. Students will have the opportunity to partake in a variety of different sports and activities, ranging from beep baseball to Zumba.

For more information visit www.campabilitiesmaryland.com.



Thank you to the following organizations for their recent support:

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| The Allen Family Foundation | The Marion I. & Henry J. Knott Foundation |
| The Baltimore Ski Club | |
| Eugene B. Casey Foundation | Morris A. Mechanic Foundation |
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